

# **EXHIBIT 8a**

## NYC To Investigate 39 Yeshivas

Mayor De Blasio says city has 'zero tolerance' for subpar secular education alleged by former chasidic students.

By **AMY SARA CLARK** ✓

July 29, 2015, 12:00 am



A billboard Yaffed put up in Williamsburg in 2016. Courtesy of Yaffed

City officials have confirmed they will investigate a complaint alleging that dozens of Brooklyn yeshivas are violating state law by giving their students a subpar education in English, math and other secular subjects.

Fifty-two yeshiva parents, graduates and former teachers signed a letter, sent on Monday to education officials, alleging that there are 39 yeshivas where boys over the age of 13 get no secular education at all. Boys aged 7 through 13 get an average of only 90 minutes of English and math instruction per day, and none at all on Fridays. Other secular subjects, such as science and history are not taught, the letter says.

Citing New York State Education Department guidelines requiring that private schools provide an education "substantially equivalent" to that of public schools, the letter asks the seven superintendents overseeing those schools to investigate the secular instruction at 38 schools in Brooklyn and one in Queens, and help any schools they find lacking to improve their English and math instruction.

Asked whether the complaint would trigger an investigation, Harry Hartfield, a Department of Education spokesman, said via email: "We take seriously our responsibility to ensure that all students in New York receive an appropriate education, and we will investigate all allegations that are brought to our attention."

One week after the letter was released, when asked whether Mayor Bill De Blasio wanted to comment, spokesman Wiley Norvell said via email: "The city takes its responsibility to address any complaint very seriously. Everyone is held to the same standard, and there is zero tolerance for the kind of educational failure alleged."

The signatures were collected by Yaffed (Young Advocates for Fair Education), a 3-year-old nonprofit advocating for a beefed up secular curriculum at chasidic yeshivas.

Yaffed founder Naftuli Moster, who attended a chasidic yeshiva in Borough Park, said the response was “nice to hear” but said he would like the Department of Education to outline what steps it plans to take to investigate and how it would help improve secular education at any schools that need it.

“Otherwise it’s just another empty promise,” he said.

Still, the promise to investigate is more of a response than Yaffed has yet received in the three years it has been asking officials to investigate yeshiva education.

In December, Yaffed’s lawyer, civil rights attorney Norman Siegel, sent a letter to city and state officials complaining about the lack of the quality secular education and asking for a meeting. However, that letter did not have the 52 signatures and did not specify specific schools. Officials did not respond directly to Yaffed but the New York City Department of Education (DOE) told media outlets it was unable to investigate without complaints about specific schools. In February, Moster sent city and state officials a list of 27 yeshivas but got no response.

Siegel, who was executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union from 1985 through 2001, said this is the first time in his career he hasn’t received “a single response” to requests to meet with public officials.

He said he finds the silence troubling. “This is a real issue and these are officials who are supposed to follow the law and they’re not.”

Yaffed did not release the names of the people who signed the letter and has asked the DOE to follow suit in order to protect them from retaliation or social ostracism.

“They could get kicked out of the yeshiva, they could get thrown out of the synagogue,” Moster said. “Once you’re labeled as someone who is going against the community, you’re either kicked out or you feel like you’re kicked out.”

He added, however, that things are changing, noting a recent article in the charedi newspaper Hamodia advocating better secular education.

Moster began advocating for better secular education in chasidic yeshivas when he discovered how unprepared for college his own yeshiva education had left him. When he left yeshiva he did not know how to do long division or write an essay. He’d never heard of a molecule, a cell, or the U.S. system of checks and balances, or even the American Revolution.

Moster said that even the 90 minutes of secular studies he did receive each day were of poor quality. Yeshiva administrators considered secular education as a waste of time, he noted, since Judaic studies were paramount, and students treated the classes as a time to goof off.

One Yaffed supporter, who requested that his name not be used for fear of backlash against his family, graduated from a prominent Borough Park yeshiva and now sends his children there. He said his sons had learned multiplication and had started on fractions when their secular education stopped.

“The teachers are very unqualified — people from the community with hardly any English knowledge,” he said in an interview earlier this year.

“My kids are really top-notch students. Each one of their tests, all their marks are top marks and it’s such a waste that they don’t get any [secular] education,” he said.

If city or state officials fail to crack down on yeshivas with poor secular education, Yaffed plans to go to court. However that would require parents of current students to sign on publicly publicly as plaintiffs, a tall order in the insular charedi communities of Crown Heights, Williamsburg and Borough Park.

“People are afraid that their children are going to be thrown out of the school [if they sign on], Siegel said. “Even with what their concerns are, they want to be there, they want their children to be there. They just want their children’s education to be better.”

Moster and Siegel stresses that a lawsuit would be against city and state officials for not enforcing the law, not against yeshiva leadership. For this reason, they asked the DOE to also keep the names of the schools private.

“We don’t want to make this a fight against specific yeshivas,” Siegel said. “My hope is that at least one of the seven superintendents will do what they are required to do under the law and that is investigate.”

Yaffed recently set up a hotline (646-350-0075) where people can learn more about the organization and leave complaints about specific yeshivas.

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*Note: This story was updated August 3 with a response from Mayor Bill de Blasio's office.*

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# **EXHIBIT 8b**

July 20, 2018 Friday 8 Av 5778  
12:26 IST



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# THE JERUSALEM POST



Haredim. (Photo by: REUTERS/BAZ RATNER)

## New York to investigate haredi schools for lack of secular studies

By SAM SOKOL  
07/29/2015

Department of Education responds following letter writing campaign of the YAFFED organization that complained about the the poor quality and scant amount of secular education at the yeshivas. The City of New York will investigate 39 Brooklyn yeshivas after a local advocacy group alleged that they have failed to implement the full state-mandated educational curriculum.

"We take seriously our responsibility to ensure that all students in New York receive an appropriate education, and we will investigate all allegations that are brought to our attention," a spokesman for the Department of Education told The New York Jewish Week on Tuesday.

While secular subjects form a much greater part of the curriculum at American ultra-Orthodox schools than in Israeli ones, especially among the non-hassidic groups, there are significant numbers of students who receive minimal instruction.

The department's response came shortly after Young Advocates for Fair Education (YAFFED), an organization that lobbies for increased secular education among New York's hassidim, organized a letter-writing campaign complaining of "the poor quality and scant amount of secular education" at the yeshivas.

The letter, sent to seven district superintendents in Queens and Brooklyn, as well as to the city's schools chancellor, alleged that the educational institutions have failed to meet New York state law requiring all nonpublic schools to provide an education that is "substantially equivalent" to what is offered in public schools and called for government intervention.

According to the Jewish Week, previous letters from YAFFED failed to raise a response from the various officials to which it turned, because it declined to name specific educational institutions.



In late 2014, The New York Times reported that YAFFED founder Naftuli Moster, along with several parents of children currently in the ultra-Orthodox school system, had brought a suit against the State of New York.

The organization is best known for running billboards in Orthodox neighborhoods calling for increased secular education. In one, a young hassidic boy is shown studying a math textbook accompanied by the Talmudic quote, "A man is obligated to teach his son a trade."

Several testimonials on YAFFED's website provide a hint of the resentment and anger among those who believe that they have been denied the education they deserve.

"In high school, we didn't get any secular education at all. We were in yeshiva for almost 12 hours a day, but didn't learn anything besides Judaic studies.

The lack of education affected me enormously. I couldn't get in to any college, and I cannot get a decent job. More importantly, I feel like I am unable to succeed to my full potential. I feel robbed. I feel violated," one anonymous Belz hassid wrote.

"I am empty, numb, void, robotic life trying to support tons of kids. [sic] i have nothing to write because i wasn't taught how to write," said another testimonial, this one from a member of the Satmar sect.

YAFFED's activities have been controversial in the ultra-Orthodox world, especially because it works outside of established channels and the community power structure to obtain its ends.

Last December, Ami Magazine, an internationally distributed haredi weekly, issued an apology after printing an advertisement for the group.

"Last night it came to my attention that in this week's edition of Ami Magazine there is a banner ad for YAFFED, an organization with a mission to change the state of Orthodox Jewish chinuch [education]," wrote editor Rabbi Yitzchok Frankfurter in an email to subscribers.

"Ami Magazine has repeatedly advocated against such efforts and has condemned organizations like YAFFED. We have asked the community to unite against all those who seek to reform the Orthodox way of life, and we remain steadfast in our resolve to defeat such misguided initiatives," he said.

However, change within the community has proved impracticable, Moster told The Jerusalem Post at the time.

"People complain about us talking to the non-Jewish media about this issue, but the [religious] newspapers repeatedly reject our ads and offers for interviews," he said.

JTA contributed to this report.



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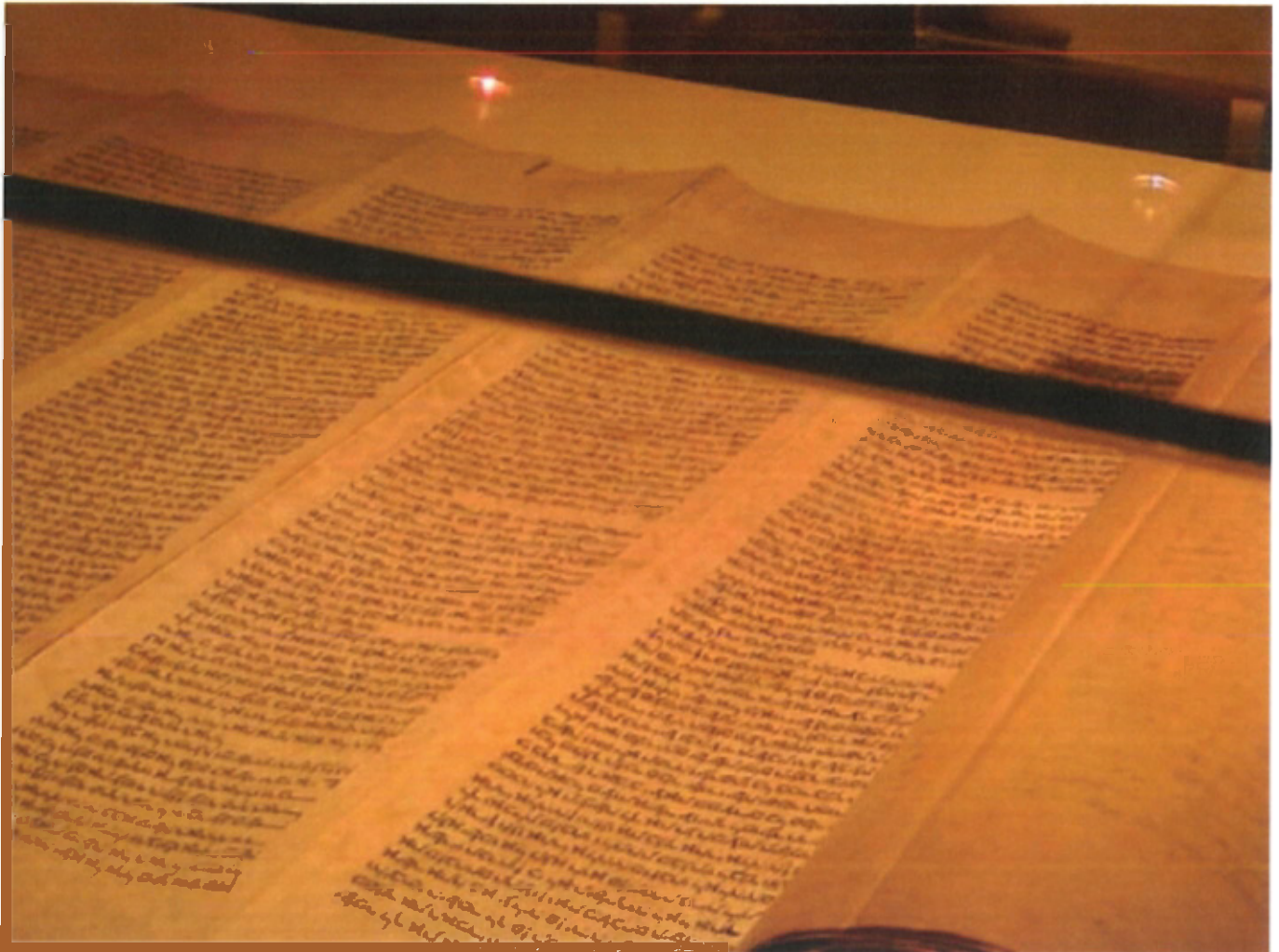
# **EXHIBIT 8c**



# ...NYC Investigating 40 Ultra-Orthodox Schools in Brooklyn

Amid claims the schools give "poor quality and scant amount of secular education."

By Simone Wilson, Patch Staff (<https://patch.com/users/simone-wilson>) | Jul 29, 2015 6:42 pm ET | Updated Aug 3, 2015 2:12 pm ET



A city probe has been launched into the educational programs at 38 ultra-Orthodox Jewish boys' schools (yeshivas) in Brooklyn, and one in Queens.

The NYC Department of Education (DOE) launched the investigation in response to a letter from Yaffed (<http://yaffed.org/about>), a progressive Jewish group "committed to improving general studies education alongside traditional curricula" at ultra-Orthodox schools.

The Jewish Week (<https://www.thejewishweek.com/news/new-york/city-probe-39-brooklyn-yeshivas>) broke news of the DOE probe on

July 28.

Fifty-two members of Yaffed signed the letter to the DOE. "We are parents of current students, former students and former teachers at the Yeshivas on the attached list, which are in your School Districts," they wrote to seven different DOE superintendents.

"We are writing to express our deep concern about the poor quality and scant amount of secular education, particularly English instruction, at these Yeshivas."

Harry Hartfield, a spokesperson for the DOE, says the department is investigating the allegations.

"We take seriously our responsibility to ensure that all students in New York receive an appropriate education," he says, "and we will investigate all allegations that are brought to our attention."

However, Yaffed's executive director, Naftuli Moster, claims the DOE has ignored many previous complaints lodged by his organization.

That's why Yaffed went with a dramatic approach this time — naming all 39 schools, and all 52 objectors, one by one. (They've asked both the DOE and the media not to release this list of names.)

"The yeshivas that are listed, they are only a small sample of what's really out there," Moster tells Patch. He claims that their disregard for city educational standards "has been going on forever."

Although the yeshivas are privately run and funded, Moster says, many receive public funds for buses, books, food, etc.

And even if that wasn't the case, Yaffed's letter points out that "New York law requires all nonpublic schools to provide an education that is 'substantially equivalent' to that available in public schools."

The Brooklyn yeshivas on Yaffed's list — mostly located in Borough Park

and Williamsburg, with a few in Crown Heights and one in Flatbush — aren't even coming close, Moster says.

From the letter:

Generally speaking, at the listed Yeshivas, English and mathematics are taught from around age 7 to age 13 for an average combined time of only 90 minutes and on only four days a week. Other secular subjects are not taught at all, let alone taught in English. At these Yeshivas, English instruction for boys stops at age 13. Girls generally receive a better secular education than do boys but we are still concerned that it is not sufficient to prepare them for their futures.

"Every year, 10s of thousands of boys are being deprived of a secular education," Moster says. "It's mind-boggling that this is all happening under our noses, in our backyard."